Claims 1-20 are pending in the application. Claims 1-15 stand rejected as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,802,063 to Deiss. For the reasons stated below, reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Briefly describing one aspect of applicant's invention, particularly as claimed by new claim 16, there is provided a method of transmitting, between a management centre and a plurality of distributed subscriber databases, a chain of database management messages comprising a plurality of management message members. In applicant's method each management message member comprises a chain header and a chain identifier, with the method generally comprising the steps of: a) determining dependencies between management messages members to be sent as part of a chain of management message members, wherein the chain identifier identifies the order of transmission of said management message members of said chain; b) using those dependencies to create a condition block for a management message member, wherein the condition block determines a permissible order of processing of each management message member forming a chain of management member messages; c) inserting the conditional block into the management message member; and d) transmitting said management message member. Moreover, in the claimed method the conditional block allows a receiver of the management message members to manage a table in the subscriber database containing information representing a processing state of each member of the chain.

It can be seen from the above that the claimed invention provides for out-of-order receipt and execution of management message members. In contrast, Deiss does not

permit out-of-order execution. Instead, the continuity counter system of Deiss requires the decoder to "throw away" the previously received MPEG data. In addition, MPEG data received after loss of the continuity count is also thrown away until a new start code is found in the MPEG stream. Further, Deiss relates primarily to decoding of MPEG streams, which are different from management messages.
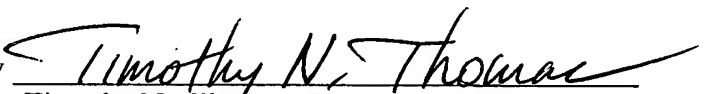
As to the Office's contention that Deiss "disclosed that detected headers in a stream of packets tells a decoder to process the incoming packets, or whether the flow of packets should be inhibited until the reception of another packet with the proper header," applicant respectfully disagrees with that interpretation of the prior art. Instead, it appears that at col. 5, 31-43, Deiss describes a system to "restart" video decode. The video decode does not recommence until the "next MPEG start code is detected by the decoder." As a result, any MPEG data that is received between the first loss of the video data until the next start code is detected is thrown away by the video decoder. This is because the MPEG video data is not a chained message as disclosed in the application. In fact, Col. 5, ll. 40-43 specifically point out that the memory system can be configured to not store received video packets between the time the first video packet is lost and the MPEG start code is detected. Moreover, the MPEG video stream does not allow for out of order execution/processing. Nor does the decoder retain the video packets received after the first lost packet.

In contrast, the claimed invention provides a system for receiving succeeding packets, storing them, and then processing these packets in an acceptable order. As a result, management member members received between the first lost member and the

repeat of the chain are either processed out of order, because the condition block permits out of order execution, or are stored for future execution.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is patentable over the cited prior art. Favorable consideration of the amended application is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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